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DE RUEHHE #0421 3160555
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5268

UNCLAS HELSINKI 000421

SIPDIS

EUR/UMB FOR JOE WANG; EUR/ERA FOR RACHEL WOLFE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: FINLAND: TEPID SUPPORT FOR BELARUS SANCTIONS

REF: STATE 112644

1. (SBU) Pol/Econoff delivered reftel remarks to Markku Lampinen, The MFA's Deputy Director for the Unit for the European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy. With obvious reluctance Lampinen said the Finnish government (GOF) is ready to extend the sanctions but would like to see a mechanism put in place to review them annually. He expressed skepticism as to whether the sanctions still have an influence on the reform process. Lampinen said the GOF favors engagement as they feel that total isolation does not work. He said the status of the sanctions discussion within the EU was unclear, and EU discussions on November 10 would shed some light on Member States, positions. He added that the discussion in Brussels mainly revolves around the sanctions, technical issues, such as whether a future lifting of the sanctions should coincide with the end of a waiver period.

2. (SBU) In separate meetings with EUR NB Director Silberstein, MFA officials expressed similar doubts about sanctions and support for engagement. The MFA's Eastern Affairs Deputy Director Hanna Lehtinen said she expected the EU to continue sanctions. She then spoke of the need to encourage unspecified positive signs from the Belarus government. Mikko Hautala, Advisor to Foreign Minister Stubb, spoke critically of sanctions on Belarus.

3. (SBU) COMMENT: It seems that the GOF will agree to a position continuing sanctions while withholding application, but it is unlikely it will offer strong support. END
COMMENT.
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